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SUBJECT: SENATOR LUGAR'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT BERDIMUHAMEDOV

1. This is an action request see paragraph 2.

2. Post is requested to pass this letter from Senator Richard Lugar to President Berdimuhamedov to the Foreign Ministry for transmission to the President's office. The original will follow by pouch.

3. Begin text of letter:

Dear Mr. President,

I read with great interest various reports of your recent visit to Baku to meet with President Aliyev. I am hopeful that your meetings were fruitful and that relations between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan will continue to strengthen and grow.

Energy cooperation can be a cornerstone of enhanced relations between your countries. I am hopeful that increased cooperation might also facilitate exchanges of experts in this area. Cooperative efforts to construct the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and South Caucasus pipelines have brought great benefit to the sovereign independence of those countries. It has also facilitated wider cooperation on security and economic matters.

I fondly recall our meeting in January. Your willingness to engage with Presidents Aliyev and Saakashvilli and deliver Turkmenistani gas through trans-Caspian outlets was very encouraging. By diversifying export routes, competition is created amongst transit and consuming countries. I believe this will permit Turkmenistan to reinforce its political independence in the region and strengthen its market position, which will ultimately benefit the people of Turkmenistan. Likewise, the United States and indeed global energy security is enhanced by diversified export routes for Central Asian gas.

I have written to Secretary of State Rice and encouraged her to invite you to visit Washington in the near future. I hope to host you and your colleagues for a visit to the Senate of the United States.

Sincerely,
Richard G. Lugar
Ranking Member

End text of letter.

RICE

NNNN